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H.C. RUELLEIGH PAPERS

SUBJECT FILES

VON SCHULTZ, NILS

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
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Dec. 8
Hanging of Von Schoultz

During the Rebellion of 1837 a group of Canadian rebels, augmented by American sympathizers from northern New York State, congregated at Ogdensburg. On Nov. 11 a part of this group crossed to the Canadian side at Prescott and occupied the Windmill. The leaders of the party managed to avoid the crossing, and the leadership fell on the shoulders of an exiled Polish gentleman, Von Schoultz.

The Canadian authorities acted quickly, bringing in troops by land and water, and the invaders were presently besieged in the Windmill. An attack was made four days later which resulted in the surrender of the insurgents.

One hundred and nine of these, including Von Schoultz, were transported to Kingston. The leaders were incarcerated in the Goal which stood on the site of the present Post Office. The remainder were imprisoned in Fort Henry.

Von Schoultz was tried, convicted and sentenced to be hanged. He was defended by a young lawyer, John A. Macdonald, who was in time to become the first Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada.

A hundred and ^{thirty} five years ago today on perhaps just such a morning as this a group of soldiers collected before the Goal and a crowd soon formed in the street, amongst whom a wide-eyed boy of six was to be found.

Presently, after some activity at the Goal door, a man stepped forth with a priest at each side. This group was quickly surrounded by the soldiers and the whole moved to the roadway where the prisoner climbed into a horse-drawn cart. The party then set out for Fort Henry. The boy followed, and was soon trudging along Ontario street, over the old wooden bridge and up the long slope to Fort Henry.

The gallows, an upright post with an arm and a rope, had been prepared on the northerly side of the ditch just before crossing the drawbridge.

Having arrived at the scene, the cart was driven in place under the gallows, the rope was adjusted, a few words of prayer were said, and then the cart moved forward, leaving the rebel leader dangling from the rope.

The body of Von Schoultz was about to be buried within the confines of the Fort, when a Mr. Cicolari, a merchant of Kingston, requested the privilege of giving the body a decent burial in the town itself. This was granted, and interment took place in the cemetery at the head of Clergy street--now Frontenac Park. Years later, the body was transferred to St. Mary's Cemetery on Division street. Here you may see today, side by side, stones which mark the last resting place of Von Schoultz and Mr. Cicolari.

And the inquisitive lad of six? He hurried home hoping that that he had not been missed. Alas! he was disappointed. A severe chastisement was administered which was to teach him that it was wrong for little boys to witness the hanging of rebels.

